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ABSTRACT

Most community colleges are involved in some sort of staff development program and are also undergoing constant change involving restructuring, rightsizing, or developing new missions and objectives. In general, the more institutionalized and integrated a staff development program is, the more effective the organization will be. Organizations are best viewed as systems composed of interdependent parts, and staff development is a major component in integrating these systems. This kind of systems view enables one to recognize that colleges are part of and are influenced by external systems. Changes in economic, political, or demographic realities in a region directly affect a college and directly affect its needs for staff development. Every college should engage in staff development to keep up with new professional and technical knowledge, socialize new employees, define the changing demands and expectations of positions, find innovative ways of doing more with less, deal with professional burnout, help staff respond to changes in organizational mission and structure, respond to client or customer needs, help staff meet government or other external demands, and provide staff with resources beyond their salaries. Finally, in implementing a staff development program, colleges should determine the role of the program and appropriate components, ensure that the program is seen as "neutral," determine who is to be served, and develop a representative advisory counsel. (HAA)

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Staff Development and Organizational Change

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STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND ORGANIZATION CHANGE [1]

I will make some comments about staff development in general and, as a case study, make reference to our experiences at HCCC. I have a number of handouts concerning ways in which the staff development program at HCCC has been affected by perhaps the most fundamental type of organizational change, reorientation of the mission statement. Increasingly, I view organizations from the point of view of what I now refer to as a "mission determinist." If we have time, we can discuss these developments at HCCC. At this point I will say that for me the most significant development at the college during the past five years has been the adoption by the Board of Trustees of a new mission statement (April 1993). That mission statement mandates that the college make the transition from a limited mission institution focused on career-preparation to a comprehensive community college offering educational services from liberal arts and science transfer programs to personal and career enhancement courses. One can see the need for a strong staff development program if this transition is to become a reality.

I am a sociologist. My areas of specialization are research methods, theory, the creation and diffusion of information and knowledge, higher education, and the nature of formal organizations. Thirty years ago, when I started my career, I taught a course on formal organizations at Hunter College. My chairman found pleasure in reminding me that while I had a good understanding of research findings and theories about such organizations, I lacked practical experience.

[1] Talk presented to the Rotary Club of Jersey City, February 13, 1997.

I spent five years teaching at Hunter and then another five years teaching at Jersey City State College. For the past twenty years I have held a number of administrative positions at HCCC.

I hope that over those years I have acquired the necessary practical experience to complement my knowledge of theory and research. At the same time, I continue to believe that there is nothing as practical as a good theory. I would also suggest that although we may not always make it explicit, we all work from some theoretical perspective.

My major activities at HCCC have focused on institutional planning, research, accreditation, assessment, and mission development. My title is dean for planning and institutional research. When in 1992, the recently appointed president, Glen Gabert, saw the necessity for the creation of a staff development program, that also became one of my responsibilities. In addition to my staff development responsibilities at HCCC, I am the book review editor for a national higher education journal entitled The Journal of Staff, Program, & Organization Development.

I suggest to you that each of our organizations is engaged in some form of staff development activity, and that the organizations with which we are associated are undergoing, to various degrees, constant change. Some of us may identify the activities as staff development or may even have offices devoted to these activities. In some cases these may be the Human Resources Department. In terms of organizational change, these may involve restructuring; rightsizing; or new missions, goals, and, objectives.

My first point is quite simple and, I believe, non-controversial. That is, the more institutionalized and integrated a staff development program, the more effective the organization. My second point is that staff development must be viewed within the context of organizational change. By definition, staff members are part of an organization and as the structure, function, and mission of the organization change, there is likely to be an impact on members of the staff. When dramatic organizational change takes place, e.g. reorganization, restructuring, change in mission, staff development activities can be put in place to help continuing employees to accept and adjust to the new realities and to orient new employees to those realities. I would also suggest that the selection/hiring process should be viewed as part of the staff development program. The better the fit between the new hires and the present and future mission of the organization, the less strain there will be on the most basic types of staff development activities. Finally, we must recognize that there are less dramatic and nonrevolutionary changes that require staff development. These may be labeled "normal," "routine," or "evolutionary" changes, e.g., gradual changes in technology, knowledge, competition, clients, benefits to employees, internal and external regulations concerning employees, etc.

As you now know, my perspective or bias is that of a sociologist. Therefore, I emphasize an organizational level of analysis. This is likely to differ from the view of those trained in human resources. Such persons are more likely to stress characteristics of employees. My perspective has points in common with the Total Quality Management or Continuous Quality Improvement approaches. The term

TQM is likely to be used in business and the term CQI is likely to be used in health and education.

In a comparison of human resources and CQI, contributors to a recent volume observe:

> Each places different weight on the importance of the individual employee as a determinant of organizational quality. W. Edwards Deming, the founding father of statistical quality control methods and quality improvement adopted in Japan (and later in the U.S.), believed that much of employee performance is determined by the system factors beyond the individual's control. Deming estimated that only ten to twenty-five percent of performance problems are due to employees and the rest are due to management and the way work is organized.
>
> Consequently, CQI approaches place less emphasis on individual motivation, individual performance appraisal systems, or pay for performance and other individually focused compensation arrangements, emphasizing instead teamwork and recognition rewards. From this perspective, quality outcomes are derived from collective efforts and cross-functional work, so CQI efforts stress team or group-based rewards and cooperation as opposed to competition. (O'Brien, Kathleen A., William McEachern, and Elizabeth A. Luther, "Human Resource Development and Management: Helping People Grow," in High Performing Colleges: The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award as a Framework for Improving Higher Education, Volume I: Theory and Concepts, Daniel Seymour and Associates. Maryville, MO: Prescott Publishing Company, 1996, p.171).

I will build on this and argue that organizations are best viewed as systems. That is, they are composed of interdependent parts. I would also argue that staff development is one of the major components that can be used to help integrate the system.

Finally, I would suggest that the systems view also enables one to recognize that the organization is part of other systems and that what happens within the

organization is influenced by those external systems. For instance, the openness of community colleges (community orientation and service) to other systems requires active and multidimensional staff development programs. In the case of HCCC, we are directly influenced by changes in the economic, political, demographic, educational, and employment systems within the county, region, state, and, to an increasing degree, the nation. Our staff development program at HCCC is influenced by factors such as immigration policy, national higher education support policy, quality of education in primary and secondary schools in the county, needs of employers in the county, policies at regional four-year colleges, and developments in academic disciplines and educational technology.

NEED FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT

It should be self-evident that as we make the transition to the global society, knowledge society, information society, post-industrial society, or cross the bridge to the 21 century, the need for life-long learning in general and staff development in particular increases. Staff development can be thought of as one phase of life-long learning. Increasingly, to different degrees, all organizations are directly or indirectly in the education business.

I have identified 10 reasons why it is necessary for every organization to engage in staff development. This list is suggestive and not exhaustive.

1. Professional and Technical Knowledge -
   New knowledge, knowledge obsolescence, new technology, new techniques, importance of keeping current. In addition, we are witnessing an increasing rate of obsolescence in each of these areas.

2. Socialization of New Employees -
Orientation program to expose new employees to the culture of the organization. We are likely to expose them to the formal organizational structure, value, and norms, however, they will also be socialized by colleagues into the informal culture. As you know, both formal and informal structures and cultures coexist in each organization.

3. Role Definition -
Changing demands and expectations of positions (e.g., professonalization of occupations, impact of technology on work).

4. Rightsizing -
Innovative ways of doing more with less.

5. Life-Cycle Developments -
Burnout, mid-career plateau, professional and career vitality.

6. Mission -
Changes in organizational mission, goals, and objectives.

7. Organizational Structure -
Changes in lines of authority, and in the composition of workforce, e.g., percentage of new employees, backgrounds of new employees, shift in the number of employees in various roles, addition or elimination of positions and departments.

8. Clients or Customers -
Changes in attitudes, skills, knowledge, preparation, expectations, needs, etc.

9. External Actors -
Government, competitors, licensing and accreditation agencies make demands that require staff development activities.

10. A Check Is Nice, However, It Is Not Enough -
What resources can and should the organization provide beyond pay and benefits such as medical, dental, pension, etc? Recently, at our monthly meeting, members of the Faculty and Staff Development Council at the college discussed the possibility of supporting a weight watchers program at the college. Is this part of staff development?

The example of weight watchers leads to the issue of program implementation, that is, the WHAT, WHERE, WHO, and HOW concerns. In terms

of advice, my answer is that we can gain some insights from the experiences of others, however, there are no universal rights or wrongs. A staff development program must fit into the culture of the organization at that period in the organization's development.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT

WHAT -

What is staff development? We can all agree that a staff development program should enhance attitudes, skills, knowledge and performance of members of the staff. That is easy. However, I suggest that each organization will be confronted with a decision concerning the "person vs role" issue. My reference to weight watchers is an example. Are we to deal with the enhancement of the person as a person or as a player in a particular role? The sociologist in me leads me to suggest the latter. At the same time, I recognize that role performance is influenced by the total well - being of the person in that role. Another example concerns payment of part-time faculty to attend workshops. It is clear that a workshop on the use of the internet in the classroom is directly related to role performance. However, recently an instructor in our culinary arts program wanted to offer a workshop on food preparation. Should an adjunct teacher of sociology be paid to attend such a workshop?

Although I have questions concerning the inclusion of weight watchers, I am strong supporter of programs concerned with employee benefits and legal, social, and interpersonal issues such as diversity and sexual harassment. These, however, are directly related to the ability of individuals to play their roles.

Another interesting theoretical and applied issue concerns our responsibility to assist role players in enhancing skills and knowledge that enable them to move to new roles in and out of the organization.

One of the recommendations of the HCCC 1993 master plan was that:

> The college should establish a formal, comprehensive and ongoing staff development program for all employee categories that would accomplish at least these goals: further education in job/discipline area; orientation to Hudson County Community College and the community it serves and promotion of understanding of and commitment to the mission

of a comprehensive community college. (Hudson County Community College:Blueprint Project, 1993, p.87).

My understanding of this recommendation is that our staff development program must address role related concerns, however, the program need not be limited to those concerns.

WHERE -

Staff development must be seen as a neutral office. To the degree possible, it should be perceived as independent of the major divisions within the organization. In our case, it is not placed in the academic, student affairs, or administrative divisions, but rather placed with other "neutral" offices, e.g., grants and institutional research. At the same time, the office must have support of the employees, the administration and in particular the CEO. Although the program should be placed in a neutral office, representatives from all sectors should be involved through an advisory council.

WHO -

Who is to be served by the staff development program? Professionals, managers, support staff, all employees? At HCCC we have a comprehensive program. It is comprehensive in that (a) it is to include all staff development activities, and (b) it is to serve all employees. To reflect the fact that the program serves all employees, we originally labeled our advisory committee, the Staff Development Committee. "Staff" was meant to include all employees. However, recently faculty representatives suggested that a number of their colleagues did not feel that this term included them. Therefore, they recommended that we change the name to Faculty and Staff Development Council. This may appear to be a minor point, however, if members of a group feel that they have not been included, the program will not achieve its potential. We have also found that while it has been relatively easy to provide services, programs, and activities for the faculty, it has been more difficult to involve the support staff in staff development. We have worked with support staff to establish an affiliated group composed entirely of support staff, however, this has not been very successful. We have made sure that all recognition programs are based on a broad definition of contribution. In this manner we recognize individuals from all sectors. However, the inclusion of support staff continues to be one of the challenges facing the staff development program. We also have a large number of part-time (adjunct) faculty. The involvement of this group in the staff development program is also a challenge. Most of you do not have a comparable situation, however, you do have outsourced and contracted personnel.

HOW -

I have already referred to the importance of the placement of staff development in a high level visible position that is seen as neutral. I have also pointed to the importance of a representative advisory council. The council can provide input, assist in establishing the legitimacy and acceptance of the staff development program, and assist with the work. Our Faculty and Staff Development Council comprises fifteen members who are appointed for two-year terms. Approximately one-half of the membership is replaced each year. The chair of the Council and I make nominations to the president.

CONCLUSIONS

Our program has been quite successful in bringing nationally recognized speakers to the college and in supporting the visit of faculty and staff to peer colleges throughout the country. We also have a very active program through which we support colleagues who participate in regional and national conferences and workshops. Other activities include a small grants program to support innovative work, workshops and seminars, recognition programs, support of a development collection in the library, mid-career fellowship program and tuition reimbursement, and the publication of a section in the college's monthly magazine, HCCC NETWORK.

All of these and other activities are carried out within the framework of our mission statement. I anticipate that as HCCC grows and expands its present programs and offers new programs, the staff development program will be a central structure through which these changes are implemented and the organization is integrated.